# Ec-Sense

AEHAC

The Allergy and Environmental Health Association of Canada
Association Allergies Santé et Environnement du Canada
Ottawa

Fall 1993

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Many of our memberships expired in September 1993. If your membership has expired or will soon expire and you would like to continue to receive the Eco-Sense, YOU could help us save money and energy. Check your mailing label for an expiry date, please send $25 to:
AEHA Ottawa Membership Renewal, P.O. Box 33023, Nepean, Ontario K2C 3Y9.

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# President's Message

As I'm writing this message I'm sure we're all gearing up for a great summer. I must get this message written now to meet the August 15 deadline as I am taking the summer off from AEHA related affairs. I promise, Cassandra!

Special thanks to Lynda Brooks for her presentation, "Living with Environmental Sensitivities" in April and to Dr. John Molot, for his presentation, "What's New in the Field of Environmental Medicine?" If you missed these excellent presentations, audiotapes are available from Tape Librarian, Pat Gorgas.

Thanks to those who helped put on a great national annual general meeting on such short notice: Chris Brown, Anne Buckingham, Christine Crawford, Kathy Dickinson, Estelle Drolet, Lesley Anne Grant, Peggy Kelly, Stephane Lecouffe, Judy Lux, Jim McCulloch, Leslirae Rotor and Ruth Williams--this was truly a cooperative effort with everyone taking a special role. The housing theme was very well received. Our special thanks to Virginia Salares and Jeff Armstrong for their excellent presentations. Special thanks also to Dr. John Molot and his staff, Connaisseur Services, Rainbow Natural Foods, Trillium Bakery, The Green Door, Saint Paul University and the Saint John Ambulance.

A videotape of the national annual general meeting housing presentations is now available in our Tape Library if you missed this event. As well, Virginia Salares will repeat her presentation at our November meeting for those members who were unable to attend the national annual general meeting.

The Education Committee has been very busy and has had a successful trial run with their school board presentation on environmental sensitivities. So successful, in fact, that the Ottawa Board of Education has invited us to sit on their Environment Committee. If you would like this presentation made to your local parent/teacher association, please give Leslirae Rotor (830-7968) or me (825-8388) a call. We were delighted to learn that the Toronto Board of Education has built an environmentally friendly school and that the Nipissing Board of Education is in the process of doing so as well. Will the Ottawa Board of Education or the Carleton Board of Education meet the same challenges offered them?

Our Public Awareness Committee, under the able leadership of Kathy Dickinson, has been very active as well. We now have a professional backdrop and a table skirt, with signage to be ordered in the fall. We exhibited at the Parenting Show, at the ''Battle of the Senses'', a National Access Awareness Week activity on Parliament Hill, and at Community Day during May and June. Special thanks to Kathy Dickinson and her father, Morris Dickinson, Estelle Drolet, Johanne Falardeau and Monique Menard for helping set up and/or answering questions from the public at our exhibits.

The Book Library has now moved and our new Librarian is Suzanne Poulin (825-7500). Suzanne lives in one of the new Barrhaven Housing Units for the Environmentally Sensitive (Unit 6), so a trip to the Library will also afford you the opportunity to see this unique housing. Assisting Suzanne will be Marcie Holyk and Catherine Squires who will help with cataloguing our collection. Thanks a million.

If you find voting at your local polling station too difficult, you will now be able to vote by mail. Information from Elections Canada will be forwarded to all AEHA members with our next issue of ***The Quarterly***.

If you have an idea you would like to propose to the Board of Management, please call any board member. We would like to hear from you. A questionnaire has been included with this mailing of the ***Eco-Sense***. Please take the time to make your voice heard and let us get to know you so that the Association may better serve you.

We have an exciting line-up of speakers for the fall– see Upcoming Events on page 14. A Christmas pot luck dinner will be planned at someone's home due to the cost of McNabb for such events--any volunteers?

Please come out and join us. You'll be glad you did.

See you soon, Elizabeth Stutt, Secretary
for President Chris Brown

# Is Your House Making You Sick?

Ask yourself:

Do you feel better outside than inside your house?

After taking a walk for 15 or 20 minutes, do you feel better or worse when you go back inside?

Are there times of the year when your house seems to bother you more?

Are there specific areas of the house which affect you more than others?

Many of us diagnosed as being environmentally hypersensitive, have to be our own sleuths and do our own investigating. At our National AGM last May, Dr. Virginia Salares, advised those attending that we have to investigate our house location:

Are you near a paper mill, mine or factory?

Is there agriculture close by that uses chemical applications or even raw manure?

Is there traffic near by, a gas station, dry cleaners, garage, golf course or parking lot?

Do your neighbours use pesticides on their lawns?

Do they have vents which spew fabric softeners into our homes?

Try to review the history of your home:

Search records to see if a licensed pest exterminator ever treated the house. Have the lawns been sprayed for weeds and insects? Was the house ever used for a home business that is a likely source of pollutants? Has the house been renovated recently? Were prior owners smokers?

How does your house smell? A new home (2 years or under) will probably have air that smells of chemicals, wood, vinyl, plastics, rubber, fragrance and disinfectant. An older home may smell musty, earthy, stale, sour, fermenting. Use analytical tools with an organoleptic method (sensory perception) in order to focus on the predominant contamination of the house.

How do you improve the health of your house?

Follow the checklists in the **Clean Air Guide** available free from CHIC (748-2367). There is a hierarchy of corrective measures and a hierarchy of more important sources. The Guide will help you maximize the gain of cleaning up your home for the least effort. Recording and analyzing observations will help make the pieces of the puzzle come together.

Some hints given by Virginia:

If you suspect mould and mildew, in the dark, shine a flashlight on the beams in your basement. If you see a black and purple fluorescent colour, mildew or mould growth exists.

Placing a smoke alarm near an oil furnace will tell you whether gases are being emitted.

Stale air, and cooking odours could indicate a poor exchange of air and the need for exhaust installation in the kitchen.

Learn more details about how to be your own sleuth at our November 18 general meeting, when Virginia will again present her useful talk. Come and learn the most important things to do to improve your house's health, and in so doing support your own health.

Soon to be released by CMHC is a Guide to Healthy Building Materials ($20).

Other publications which may be of help:

Investigating, Treating & Diagnosing Your Damp Basement, NHA6541

How to Improve the Quality of Air In Your Home, 1989, NHA6177

Guide to Residential Exhaust Systems, NHA6114.

Have any members changed to Low-E windows.? Virginia would like you to get in touch with her at the Research Division, CMHC (748-2032).

## Strategies For a Healthier House

**I. Control the Source**

1. Remove or Substitute the offending material
2. Seal with a tolerated sealant (Crystal Aire satin finish should be used under dry conditions. It flakes off in high humidity)
3. Use good building techniques. eg. good vapour air barrier

**II. Ventilation**

Bring air into the house:

1. Passive Ventilation - open windows
2. Active Mechanical Ventilation a) local - install an exhaust in bathroom or kitchen b) central - fresh air can be brought in through an air inlet & stale air is removed by central exhaust with no attempt to recover heat. - install an air to air heat exchanger also called a heat recovery ventilation unit (HRV) to recover heat.

**III. Filters**

Better to remove the pollutant but if you do use filters, select a filter to match the pollutant you are trying to remove.

1. Filter to remove particulates - An electronic air cleaner will remove dust and small particles. It produces ozone so be sure to wash it once a week to minimize the ozone. An electrostatic filter has either a filter which has to be replaced or a washable one. (Polypropylene is best tolerated). Other types: pleated paper, bag type filters, woven cotton filters in a special holder.
2. Filters for Gaseous Contaminants - (trays must be specially made). Activated charcoal (coconut or peat) is a good adsorbent. It removes traffic fumes, diesel, formaldehyde and carbon monoxide.It needs to be changed otherwise it can disperse the contaminant back into the air. Activated alumina, with potassium permanganate, changes colour when it needs to be replaced, is expensive, and needs to be changed periodically.

**(Notes taken at National AGM - Virginia Salares, "Is Your House Making You Sick")**

# A Clean-Air Housing Project

## by Jeff Armstrong

Meeting the housing needs of people who suffer from Environmental Illness is an issue that is not well understood by the design professionals, contractors and government agencies who work to provide housing in this country. This is now beginning to change. With the recent completion of the ''Barrhaven Project'', a seven unit apartment building in Nepean, Ontario, a significant step has been taken toward the supply of affordable ''clean air'' housing.

While the construction industry is only now learning how to respond to Environmental Illness, three key principles have emerged from the work that has been done so far. The first is **Source Control** - the use of materials within the fabric of the building whose characteristics are tolerable to the occupants. The second is **Air tightness** - necessary to minimize the amount of pollutant-laden air leaking in through the building envelope. The third, which is the flip side of the Air Tightness coin, is **Balanced Ventilation** - polluted air must be removed from an airtight building and fresh air filtered, tempered and supplied at the same rate as stale air is exhausted.

While Air tightness and Balanced Ventilation, which incidentally are also key ingredients of an energy efficient building, are relatively well understood, coming up with a palette of construction materials that are tolerable to EI sufferers is a much more difficult problem.

The job of selecting appropriate materials along with the other aspects of designing and constructing the Barrhaven building was a collaborative effort of Phillip Sharp Architect Ltd.; Buchan, Lawton Parent Engineers; and Drerup Armstrong Construction Ltd. These three firms working with Barrhaven Non-Profit Housing Inc. (the Client), the Ministry of Housing Ontario, and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, proposed, reviewed, revised and eventually adopted measures meant to provide the first multi-unit, clean-air building anywhere - and all within the Ministry of Housing budget for social housing.

( Continued on page 9.)

# Construction & Renovation Sources

**Canadian Housing Information Centre (CHIC)**
700 Montreal Rd.,
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 0P7
(613) 748-2367
. open to the public

**DCF Renovations**
1364 Gaultois Ave
Orleans, Ontario K1C 3G6
(613) 824-6084

**Drerup Armstrong Ltd.**
Box 130
2161 Westhunt Drive
Carp, Ontario K0A 1L0
(613) 836-1494, fax: (613) 831-2730
. a Design Build firm specializing in energy efficient buildings & buildings for the environmentally sensitive.

**Ed Lowans**
707 - 5 Tangreen Court
Willowdale, Ontario M2M 3Z1
(416) 512-2628

**Ontario Home Renewal Program**
(613) 820-8305, 1-800-267-6108

**Ottawa Restore**
528 Cedarview Rd.
Nepean, Ontario K2H 7V2
(613) 825-8900
. reuse of all building materials

**Bruce M. Small and Associates Ltd.**
R.R. #1 Goodwood, Ontario L0C 1A0
(416) 649-1356, fax: (416) 649-1314
. consultations on environmentally safe housing renovations and construction.

**Green Eclipse Inc.**
(613) 788-3100, Contact in Ottawa: Jay Kassirer
. free referral service (see p. 11)

**Thermotech Windows Ltd.**
109 - 42 Antares Drive
Nepean, Ontario K2E 7Y4
(613) 225-1101 Fax: (613) 225-4630
. energy efficient fiberglass windows

# Furniture / Housewares Sources

. look for simple wood and metal furniture. (birch, maple and basswood seem to be best tolerated, but still should be sealed)
. avoid upholstery if you have dust allergies
. look at second hand shops and antiques
. avoid scotch guard and fire repellant
. look for stainless steel, cast iron
. use a futon mattress or a cotton mattress
. avoid replacing kitchen cupboards with particle board and laminated products

**BB Bargoon's**
521 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6Z6
(613) 234-6513

**Bond's Decor Ltd.**
1242 Bank Street
Ottawa, Ontario
(613) 523-1534
150 Robertson Rd
Nepean, Ontario
(613) 721-5527
. unpainted solid wood furniture

**Canadian Duvet Otawa**
18 ByWard Market
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7A1
(613) 563-4190

**Canadian Tire Stores**
Check your Telephone Directory.
. stainless steel thermos, corningwear, garden supplies, charcoal filter face masks

**Cohen & Cohen Ltd.**
1963 Merivale Rd.
Nepean, Ontario
(613) 225-9111
. used furniture

**The Duvet Shop**
43 William Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6Z9
(613) 238-5582
.100% cotton designer sheets

IKEA CANADA
10 Stafford Road South
Nepean, Ontario K2H 8V9
(613) 829-4530
. 100% cotton sheets and fabrics
. good source of solid wood and metal
. avoid particle board and laminated products.

New Morning Futons
581 Bank Street
Ottawa Ontario K1S 3T4
(613) 230-3777

**Neighbourhood Services**
987 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 2Y1
(613) 728-3737
. second hand furniture

**Salvation Army**
171 George Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5W5
(613) 232-1573
. second hand furniture

**Sleeptek Ltd.**
50 Colonnade Rd
Nepean, Ontario K2E 7J6
(613) 727-5337
151 Blvd Greber
Gatineau, Quebec
(819) 561-3636
. custom-made mattresses and futons with untreated material.

**St. Vincent de Paul Society**
1301 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 3B1
(613) 722-7166
. second hand furniture

# Paint Sources

Unless otherwise indicated these sources can be found under Paint in your Yellow Pages.

**Environmental Care**, Colour Your World
. water-based, no solvent fumes, tinting can add VOCs.

**C-I-L Dulux**, ICI Paints Canada Inc
. interior latex paint free of petroleum-based solvents, white and off-white available

**Crystal Aire** (satin) made by Pace in California. Available at Smith's Pharmacy in Toronto (416) 488-2600
. can be used as a sealant because it encapsulates resin binder, water soluble, use under dry conditions, flakes off in high humidity, has an odour when wet.

**F-Sorb**
. a formaldehyde absorbent treated Eco-latex. Available from Smith's Pharmacy in Toronto (416) 488-2600.

**Lifemaster 2000**, Glidden
. contains no petroleum-based solvents (VOC's), low odour, available in Flat, Eggshell and Semi-gloss and pre-packaged colours.

**Livos Plant Chemistry Canada**
. non-toxic, natural ingredients, citrus smelling
. water-based, stains, thinners, waxes, oil finish is called KALDET. c/o EcoHouse (1988) Inc., Box 220, Station A, Fredricton, N.B. E3B 4Y9. Tel: 506-366-3529. (catalogue available)

**Teekah** Environmental Products/Teekah Natural Paints and Finishes 96 Harbord St., Toronto, Ont., M5S 1G6. Tel: 416-962-3485.
. paints, varnishes, waxes, wood finishes, polishes made without petrochemicals or synthetic additives. Only plant resins, oils and mineral pigments are used. Catalogue is available.

**PAINTING BEST DONE IN SUMMER.**

## A Clean-Air Housing Project, (continued from p. 4)

One of several design objectives was to minimize the number of different materials used in the building, not only to reduce the difficulty of identifying a problem should one arise, but also to make greatest use of materials in which the designers had the most confidence. Basswood was used extensively as a finish material for example, because it is known to emit relatively small amounts of aromatic turpines. Another objective was to keep costs down by employing a single building element to do more than one job. An example of this was the use of pre-cast concrete slabs for the second floor. When polished, these slabs provide an attractive floor finish, a structural floor, the ceiling finish of the rooms below and a fire separation between living spaces.

The building is in many ways a "working hypothesis", and with all such forms of experimentation it is essential to obtain feedback from the people whom the building was meant to serve, namely the occupants. The building has been occupied since April, 1993, and although a structured post-occupancy evaluation has not yet been done, informal feedback suggests that some of the decisions taken by the design group are less successful than hoped for, while others appear to be working well. These are still early days but the building appears, from all accounts, to be a qualified success.

Success or failure in technical terms is however less significant than what this project means politically. In reflecting on the many positive aspects of this experience its greatest success may be that the government agencies involved in its creation acknowledged in concrete terms that Environmental Illness is a legitimate disability deserving of consideration within the context of social housing. From this point of view, the important thing is not whether the Barrhaven building is the definitive model for all future buildings of its type but rather that it got built at all.

While the firms responsible for producing this building worked to resolve difficult construction issues within rigid financial constraints, the real vision necessary for its creation came from the parishioners and administrators of the Barrhaven United Church, the people who planted the seed with the Ministry of Housing. Much patience, will, and determination were required of them, the number of unknowns was great, the risk of failure high.

Now as the intensity of the construction process fade from memory and the social realities of coping with Environmental Illness in the Barrhaven setting assert themselves, this journey on uncharted waters will continue to provide much valuable information for the next clean-air housing project. When and where will the next project occur? Why not get in touch and let us know what you think, perhaps we can build on the Barrhaven experience together. For additional information contact Jeff Armstrong (613) 836-1494.

***Jeff Armstrong, Architect, is the Director of Drerup Armstrong Ltd., a Design Build firm specializing in energy efficient buildings and buildings for the environmentally sensitive.***

**Proposed Changes to Ontario's Building Code ( Bill 112) Expected July 1, 1993**

Major changes affecting housing are:

* Leakproofing basements
* Full height basement insulation
* New mechanical ventilation systems
* Increased energy efficiency provisions
* Revised fire protection levels

(The Ottawa Sun, June 11, 1993, p.34)

**Painting Tip**

Furnishings and carpets can absorb paint odours which are later released. When painting a room remove furniture and cover them. Ventilate the room being painted so odours don't settle in other areas of the house. Even wallboard can pick up the odours.

(See Paint Sources on p. 6 and 13.)

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# Products & Services Information

✱ Received from **Medic-Savoure Limited, Allergenic Biological Laboratory**, Box 70, Dutton, Ontario, N0L 1J0, (519) 762-3045, information regarding a new line of Allergy Control Products: Allergy Control Covers (for pillows, mattresses & Box Springs), Allergy Control Solution (for dust in carpets and upholstered furniture), and Vacufilt Allergy Control (vacuum exhaust filters). Also included are papers on "The Effect of Allergy Control Solution on Dust Mite Antigen Levels in Carpets", "The Effect of Allergy Control Solution on Cat Allergen Levels in Carpets", and "Reducing domestic exposure to dust mite allergen reduces bronchial hyperreactivity in sensitive children with asthma". Binder has been forwarded to AEHA Book Library.

✱ **Source of cotton clothing** - sweat shirts, T-shirts, fleece jersey and pants formaldehyde-free, petrochemical free and no chlorine bleach. The Natural Order, P.O. Box 850, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2Z2, 1-800-268-9743. Kathy Dickinson has ordered a sample T-shirt with water-based dye technique.

✱ **New Whole Grain Natural Bakery** - David's Bakery (formerly of Trillium Bakery) 380 Elgin St., Elgin and Gladstone (567-8480). Available breads: Sour Dough (No yeast), rice, barley and spelt. Available muffins: spelt, barley and rice cookies.

✱ Available at Buchanan Lighting (728-3551) is a **full spectrum 4 foot Excella lamp** for $8.95. Full refund if after 14 days trial period you are not satisfied.

✱ Nutri-Chem Pharmacies are now carrying **Natracare sanitary pads, shields and tampon products** which are completely free from chlorine bleached material and dioxin. Natracare uses Hydrogen peroxide as a whitener. The tampons are 100% cotton with no rayon fibres and have shown to have the lowest level of fibre loss. The pads are fluff pulp from Sweden, no chemicals. Extremely sensitive individuals should not use the slender pads as they have super-absorbent granules in the pulp to increase absorbency.

✱ Bruce Small has founded a company called **Green-Eclipse** that is introducing **a free referral service** that can help allergic/asthmatic persons avoid indoor irritants and triggers that may be affecting their health. The company offers alternative recommendations for each of the following categories: builders, renovators, and architects that minimize indoor irritants and triggers; inspection services (e.g. to locate existing mold problems and or other irritants and triggers); consulting services for remediation of indoor environment problems identified; home cleaners that clean thoroughly and use cleaning products you can tolerate; duct cleaners that clean safely and thoroughly, without addition of chemical irritants; lawn care services that don't use pesticides and herbicides. Contact: Jay Kassirer, Green Eclipse Inc., Ottawa Phone No.(788-3100).

✱ **Parent package for school age children with anaphylaxis** available from AAIA for $30 plus $5 postage and handling (non-members). Call (416) 785-4684.

✱ **TRI-CLEAN Re-usable laundry discs** can be added to your laundry with or without detergent. They are ceramic beads in polypropylene casing. (Available at Nutrichem Pharmacy)

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# News From Our Health Minister

In the fall of 1992 an Ontario provincial advisory committee recommended several new initiatives for people who suffer from conditions that are not well understood (environmental sensitivity, fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue). One of these initiatives is that a clinic be established for individuals with sensitivities and other non-specific disorders.

On August 31, 1993, Ruth Grier, Ontario's Minister of Health, wrote our President to tell us that arrangements for the clinical and research aspects of the program will be completed soon. At the aforementioned clinic, "patients will receive complete assessments and appropriate referrals in a supportive atmosphere. Through the clinic, university-based researchers will also conduct studies on the diagnosis, treatment, cause and prevention of these conditions. The clinic's services will be available to people whose physicians refer them there for assessment and to those who contact the clinic directly."

We also received a Summary Report by the Joint Task Force to the Minister of Health (Ontario) called "Moving Forward-Strengthening Health Planning in Ontario". In it, the Government of Ontario endorses a "Vision of Health" that emphasizes a broader definition of health:

**"We see an Ontario in which people live longer in good health, and disease and disability are progressively reduced. We see people empowered to realize their full health potential through a safe, non-violent environment, adequate income, housing, food and education, and a valued role to play in family, work and the community. We see people having equitable access to affordable and appropriate health care, regardless of geography, income, age, gender or cultural background. Finally, we see everyone working together to achieve better health for all."**

We encourage you to write Ruth Grier, Minister, Ministry of Health, Hepburn Block, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M7A 2C4 and

1) congratulate her on recognizing the need for this long-awaited clinic, but encourage her to complete the arrangements quickly as we need services now. 2) stress that in order for those with environmental sensitivities to "have equitable access to affordable and appropriate health care", we need medical coverage for alternate therapies as many of us do not respond to traditional approaches.

The Ontario government has formed a Royal **Commission on Learning** and will be hearing presentations during November. If you are interested in helping develop a presentation to the Royal Commission, please contact Elizabeth Stutt now (825-8388).

## MILK PAINT

True milk paint comes in a powder and when mixed with water, it acts like a stain on a porous surface like raw wood and plaster. It contains milk protein, clay, lime, and earth pigments. The earth pigments used are either natural oxides or vegetable dyes. Some pigments from wild berries, coal and seeds include ochre, umber, siennas, iron oxide and lampblack.

The paint sinks into the wood fibres and the milk protein acts as a binding agent. By adjusting the volume of water added, the paint can be thick enough for stencilling or thin enough for a wash. Gloves should be worn as the lime in the wet paint can irritate the skin.

It is solvent-free and is non-toxic when dry. Virginia Salares, CMHC, says tests show that people with milk allergies can be sensitive to milk-painted walls and furniture.

Thibeau's milk paint is distributed in Canada by Druker and Ross. It is available for $19.95 a bag at Randall's Paints.

(The Ottawa Citizen, Interiors/ Milk Paint, May 22, 1993)

# Upcoming Events

**AEHA Ottawa Branch Meetings are held at the McNabb Community Centre, 180 Percy Street.**

### Thursday, October 21 at 7:30 p.m.

The Benefits of Massage and Cranial Sacral Therapies in the Treatment of Environmental Disease.

by Patricia MacNeil, B.A., R.M. T.

(Emphasis will be placed on identifying your own individual needs in these areas, how to select a therapist; and, when to seek and not to seek these modalities in treating your condition. Applications of these therapies to the treatment of infants and children will also be discussed. "Hands on" techniques for the immune system will be taught.)

### Thursday, November 18 at 7:30 p.m.

"Is Your House Making You Sick? (How To Be Your Own Sleuth)"

by Virginia Salares, Ph.D., Research Division, CMHC

### December

Christmas Pot Luck Dinner

Location and Date to be announced. (Please call one of our contact numbers (on page 1) at the end of November if you are interested in attending)

### Thursday, February 17 at 7:30 p.m.

Annual General Meeting for the Ottawa Branch.

Speaker to be announced.

***We welcome you to our general meetings.***
***Please refrain from wearing scented products.***

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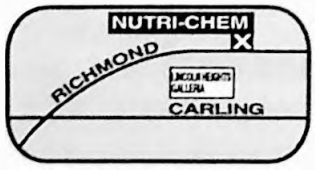


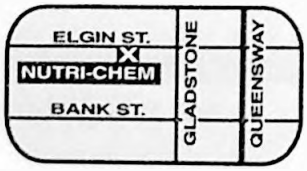


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